Procopius Anthemius

(12 April 467 – 11 July 472)

SOURCES

The only approximation of a connected account of the life of the emperor Anthemius is found in a verse panegyric delivered to him in Rome on 1 January 468 by the Gaul Sidonius Apollinaris, whose letters also discuss several of the events of his reign. *The Life of St. Epiphanius* by Ennodius of Pavia also includes a revealing vignette of Anthemius. And several sources, such as Procopius, provide rather full accounts of the Vandal War of 468. Otherwise, Anthemius is known from terse references that survive either in chronicles, such as those of the Spaniard Hydatius and Count Marcellinus, or in extracts from writers whose complete works do not survive, such as the Byzantine writers Priscus, Candidus, and John of Antioch. In addition, three *novellae* ("new laws") issued by Anthemius are extant. Taken together, these sources make Anthemius, after **Majorian**, the best known of the "shadow emperors."

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Anthemius was born in Constantinople, perhaps *ca.*420. His maternal grandfather was a powerful senator, likewise named Anthemius, who was Praetorian Prefect of the East from 405 to 414, consul in 405, and patrician. His father, Procopius, was Master of Soldiers of the East (422-424) and likewise a patrician; he was said to have been descended from the usurper Procopius (365). Hydatius claims that Anthemius had a brother, also named Procopius, but there is no other evidence for this and it probably is a mistake. *Circa* 453, Anthemius married Aelia Marcia Euphemia, the only daughter of the eastern emperor Marcian (450-457). The couple had four known sons: Anthemiolus, Fl. Marcianus, Procopius Anthemius, and Romulus.

EARLY LIFE

Like his father, Anthemius engaged in a military career. He was made a military *comes* ("Count") after his marriage and worked refurbishing the defenses on the Danube frontier, which was in a state of disruption after the death of Attila the Hun in 453. He does not seem to have engaged in any combat. Upon his return to Constantinople in 454, Marcian granted him high honors, making him Master of Soldiers and Patrician, and nominating him for the consulate, which he held in 455 with the western emperor **Valentinian III** ("*hinc reduci datur omnis honos, et utrique magister / militiae consulque micat, coniuncta potestas / patricii...*": Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmen* 2.205-207). These honors, along with his marriage, would suggest that Marcian saw Anthemius as a likely successor to the throne. Indeed, the Byzantine chronicler John Malalas believed that Marcian actually did make Anthemius emperor:

"Furthermore, Marcian gave to Anthemius in marriage his daughter from an earlier marriage, and he made him emperor in Rome. From her Anthemius had a daughter, whom he placed with the Master of Soldiers Ricimer... While Leo was ruling, Anthemius reigned at Rome, whom Marcian had raised to the imperial power" (*Chron*. 368-369).

Either Malalas was simply wrong, or it may be that Marcian had in fact toyed with the idea of making Anthemius western emperor after the deposition of **Avitus** in October, 456, but that his death in January, 457, prevented the plan from going any further.

After Marcian's death, any hopes that Anthemius may have had for imperial honors were disappointed when the choice for the eastern throne fell upon **Leo**, a career soldier who held the rather modest rank of "Tribune of the Mattiarii." **Leo** was the candidate of the powerful barbarian, and Arian, Master of Soldiers Aspar who, unable or unwilling to aspire to the throne himself, hoped to name an undistinguished candidate whom he would be able to manipulate, à la Ricimer in the west. Clearly, Anthemius was not in this category. Under **Leo**, Anthemius continued as Master of Soldiers. In Illyricum, perhaps *ca.*460, he defeated a group of Ostrogoths commanded by Valamer. Several years later, circa the winter of 466/467, he subdued a group of Huns under Hormidac who had crossed the Danube and were raiding Dacia.

ACCESSION

Meanwhile, **Leo** was forced to contend with the Vandals. For years they had been raiding the coast of Italy, a circumstance that seems to have caused little distress for the eastern court. But by 467 the Vandal raids extended to Greece. The contemporary Byzantine historian Priscus reported,

"After the death of Valentinian [in 455], Gaiseric gained the support of the Moors, and every year at the beginning of spring he made invasions into Sicily and Italy, enslaving some of the cities, razing others to the ground, and plundering everything; and when the land had become destitute of men and of money, he invaded the domain of the emperor of the east. And so he plundered Illyricum and most of the Peloponnesus and of Greece and all the islands that lie near it. And again he went off to Sicily and Italy, and kept plundering and pillaging all places in turn..." (*Bellum Vandalicum* 5.22-24: Dewing trans., p.53)

Leo, to deal with this and other concerns, in the spring of 467 nominated Anthemius to be emperor of the west, where there had been an interregnum ever since the death of Libius Severus in 465.

Anthemius was dispatched with an army under the command of Marcellinus, Master of Soldiers in Dalmatia, and acclaimed emperor near Rome on 12 April 467. Cassiodorus noted, "Anthemius was sent to Italy by the emperor Leo; he assumed the emperorship at the third milestone from the City at the place called Brontotas" ("*Anthemius a Leone imp. ad Italiam mittitur, qui tertio ab urbe miliario in loco Brontotas suscepit imperium*": *Chron*. 1283 *s.a*.467). Hydatius placed the event a few miles up the road: "Anthemius is named the forty- sixth emperor at the eighth milestone from Rome" ("*Romanorum XLVI Anthemius, octavo milario de Roma, Augustus appellatur*": *Chron.* 235). And Count Marcellinus noted simply, "Leo sent the patrician Anthemius to Rome and established him as emperor" ("*Leo imperator Anthemium patricium Romam misit imperatoremque constituit*": *Chron*. *s.a*.467). The date is given by the *Fasti vindobonenses priores* (no.597, *s.a.*467): "*his cons. levatus est imp. do.n. Anthemius Romae prid. idus Aprilis.*"

For **Leo**, the appointment of Anthemius not only would have rid him of a potential rival, it also placed an experienced general in charge of the western phase of his proposed campaign against the Vandals. As for Gaiseric, it gave him a pretext for stepping up his coastal pillaging. Procopius, for example, stressed the role played by the Vandals in Anthemius' appointment:

"Now, before this time Leo had already appointed and sent Anthemius as emperor of the west, a man of the senate of great wealth and high birth, in order that he might assist him in the Vandalic war. And yet Gaiseric kept asking and earnestly entreating that the imperial power be given to Olybrius, who was married to Placidia, the daughter of Valentinian, and on account of his relationship well-disposed toward him, and when he failed in this he was still more angry and kept plundering the whole land of the emperor"(*Bellum Vandalicum* 6.9: Dewing trans., p.57).

The return to a dual emperorship was celebrated in Constantinople by the delivery of a panegyric by Dioscorus, the teacher of **Leo's** daughters, who was later rewarded by being made Praetorian Prefect of the East.

In general, relations between the eastern and western courts seem to have been cordial throughout Anthemius' reign. In 468, Anthemius was accorded the signal honor of serving as sole consul for the year (this also would have matched **Leo's** sole consulate in 466), this being his second consulate. Anthemius' son Fl. Marcianus, moreover, not only held the consulate in both 469 and 472 (although Bagnall *et al.*, *CLRE* p.479, argue that these are not the same person), but also married **Leo I's** younger daughter Leontia in 471. Throughout Anthemius' reign, moreover, east and west each appointed one of the two consuls, and both consuls were regularly recognized throughout the empire (see Bagnall *et al.*, *CLRE*, pp.466-479).

Anthemius was faced with several problems. Much of the west, of course, was held by various barbarian peoples, and he really only controlled Italy. As an easterner, moreover, his rule was resented in some western quarters, and he was sometimes mocked for his Greek origin. He also may have had pagan sympathies. Furthermore, the social and economic issues faced by **Majorian** had not been solved, and, indeed, had only grown more serious. And a crucial question was how well Anthemius would be able to cooperate with the powerful Patrician and Master of Soldiers Ricimer, who had become accustomed to making and unmaking western emperors, having been responsible for the depositions of **Avitus (455- 456)**, and **Majorian (457-461)**, and for the elevation of Severus (461-465).

Anthemius sought to create a family bond with his barbarian general, and at the end of 467 a marriage between Ricimer and Anthemius' only daughter Alypia was celebrated. The festivities were described in a letter to a friend by Sidonius, who had just arrived at Rome on a mission from Gaul:

"As yet, I have not presented myself at the bustling gates of Emperor or court official. For my arrival coincided with the marriage of the patrician Ricimer, to whom the hand of the emperor's daughter was being accorded in the hope of more secure times for the state. Not individuals alone, but whole classes and parties are given up to rejoicing... While I was writing these lines, scarce a theatre, provision-market, praetorium, forum, temple, or gymnasium but echoed to the cry of 'Talassio'! And even at this hour the schools are closed, no business is done, the courts are voiceless, missions are postponed; there is a truce to intrigue, and all the serious business of life seems merged in the buffooneries of the stage. Although the bride has been given away, although the bridegroom has put off his wreath, the consular his palm-broidered robe, the brideswoman her wedding gown, the distinguished senator his toga, and the plain man his cloak, yet the noise of the great gathering has not died away in the palace chambers because the bride still delays to start for her husband's house. When this merrymaking has run out its course, you shall hear what remains to tell of my proceedings, if

indeed these crowded hours of idleness to which the whole state seems now surrendered are ever to end, even when the festivities are over"(*Epist*. 1.5.10-11: Dalton trans., 1.12-13)

Sidonius, therefore, hints that Alypia may not have been overjoyed at the prospect of an arranged marriage with what she may have perceived as an uncouth barbarian general.

ANTHEMIUS AND THE PROVINCES

Anthemius was confronted by hostilities with the two most powerful barbarian peoples of the west, the Vandals, who controlled Africa and were raiding the Mediterranean coasts, and the Visigoths, who were expanding their holdings in Gaul and Spain. His accession had occurred as a result of Vandal pressures, and it was they who demanded his most immediate attentions. For the first time since the early 440s, the eastern and western Romans were allied against Geiseric. Maneuvering began immediately after Anthemius' accession. According to Priscus,

"The emperor Leo sent Phylarchus to Gaiseric to inform him about the sovereignty of Anthemius and to threaten war unless he left Italy and Sicily. He returned and announced that Gaiseric was unwilling to submit to the commands of the emperor but was preparing for war because the treaty [of 461] had been broken by the eastern Romans"(*fr*.40: Gordon trans. p.120).

And Hydatius notes that an initial western expedition, presumably under the command of Marcellinus, came to nought: "An expedition to Africa that had been organized against the Vandals was recalled because of a change in circumstances and the unsuitability of the weather" ("*expeditio ad Africam adversus Vandalos ordinata, metabolarum commutatione et navigationis inopportunitate revocatur*": *Chron.* 236 s.a.467). This expedition would have occurred in late 467, when the stormy winter weather of the *mare clausum* ("closed sea") would have prevented any further naval operations.

In 468, a massive joint eastern-western expedition was set in motion. Priscus continued,

"The emperor Leo equipped and sent a great expedition against Gaiseric, the ruler of the Africans who, after the death of Marcian [in 457], had committed many terrible depredations against the lands under the sovereignty of the Romans, pillaging and enslaving many men and demolishing their cities. Therefore, the emperor, aroused to anger, collected from all the eastern sea 1,100 ships, filled them with soldiers and arms, and sent them against Gaiseric. They say that he spent 1,300 *centenaria* [130,000 lb.] of gold on this expedition." (*fr*.40: Gordon trans. pp.120-121).

The historian Candidus was more specific regarding expenditures:

"Leo Makellos ("the Butcher"), who ruled after Marcian, lavished limitless money on the expedition against the Vandals. For, as those who administered these things reveal, 47,000 pounds of gold were raised through the prefects, 17,000 pounds of gold through the count of the treasury, and 700,000 pounds of silver, apart from adequate amounts raised from the public funds and from the emperor Anthemius" (*fr*.2: Gordon trans., p.121).

Procopius also provides an account of the assembly of the Byzantine fleet:

"And the emperor Leo, wishing to punish the Vandals... was gathering an army against them, and they say that this army amounted to about 100,000 men. And he collected a fleet of ships from the whole of the eastern Mediterranean, showing great generosity to both soldiers and sailors, for he feared lest from a parsimonious policy some obstacle might arise to hinder him in his desire to carry out his punishment of the barbarians. Therefore, they say, 1,300 *centenaria* were expended by him to no purpose" (*Bellum Vandalicum* 6.1-2: Dewing trans., p.55).

Initially, the fleet met with success, as reported by Priscus:

"As general and commander of the expedition [Leo] appointed Basiliscus, the brother of the empress Verina... When no small force from the east had been collected, he engaged frequently in sea fights with Gaiseric and sent 340 of his ships to the bottom" (*fr*.40: Gordon trans. pp.120-121).

On the western front, meanwhile, Anthemius' Master of Soldiers Marcellinus likewise went on the offensive against the Vandals. Procopius makes it clear that this too served **Leo's** interests:

"Now, there was in Dalmatia a certain Marcellinus, one of the acquaintances of Aëtius and a man of repute, who, after Aëtius had died no longer deigned to yield obedience to the emperor, but beginning a revolution and detaching all the others from allegiance, held the power of Dalmatia himself, since no one dared encounter him. But the emperor Leo at that time won over this Marcellinus by very careful wheedling, and bade him go to the island of Sardinia, which was then subject to the Vandals. And he drove out the Vandals and gained possession of it with no great difficulty" (*Bellum Vandalicum* 6.7-8: Dewing trans., p.57)

The *Consularia constantinopolitana* reported in this regard, "Anthemius was made emperor at Rome. A great army under the general Marcellinus was sent against the Vandals" ("*Antemius Romae imperator factus est. Adversum Wandalos grandis exercitus cum Marcellino duce dirigitur*": *s.a.*464).

At the same time, a third front also was opened; Procopius continued:

"And Heraclius was sent from Byzantium to Tripoli in Libya, and after conquering the Vandals of that district in battle, he easily captured the cities, and leaving his ships there, led his army on foot toward Carthage... "(*Bellum Vandalicum* 6.9: Dewing trans., p.57)

This coordinated activity was even reported in Spain in 469 when an embassy to Anthemius returned:

"The legates that had been sent to the emperor returned announcing that, under his authority, a very immense army under three carefully chosen generals had been sent by the emperor Leo against the Vandals, and that Marcellinus likewise had been sent by the emperor Anthemius with an immense force allied to Leo's army, and that Ricimer had been made the son-in-law of Anthemius and patrician... "("*Legati qui ad imperatorem missi fuerant, redeunt nuntiantes, sub praesentia sui, magnum valde exercitum cum tribus ducibus lectis adversum Vandalos a Leone imperatore descendisse, directo Marcellino pariter cum manu magna eidem per imperatorem Anthemium sociata. Rechimerum generum Anthemii imperatoris et patricium factum...*": Hydatius, *Chron.* 247. s.a.469?).

In its early phases, therefore, the campaign went marvelously well: **Basiliscus'** fleet sank several hundred Vandal ships; Marcellinus captured Sardinia and part of Sicily; and Heraclius captured several Vandal cities, including Tripoli. But, reprising **Majorian's** campaign, the imperial plans soon began to go awry. In August, Marcellinus came to a bad end in Sicily, as reported by the homonymous chronicler Marcellinus:

"Marcellinus, patrician of the west and at the same time a pagan, while he was bringing supplies and assistance to the Romans fighting against the Vandals near Carthage, was cut down by trickery by those individuals on whose behalf he clearly had come to fight" ("*Marcellinus Occidentis patricius idemque paganus dum Romanis contra Vandalos apud Carthaginem pugnantibus opem auxiliumque fert, ab iisdem dolo confoditur, pro quibus palam venerat pugnaturus*": *Chron. s.a.*468).

Cassiodorus provides the date ("*his cons. occisus est Marcellinus in Sicilia mense Aug*":*Chron*. 1285; *cf. Fast.vind.prior.*601, "*In Siciliis Marcellinus occiditur*").

Equally wretched was the denouement of **Basiliscus'** campaign, as detailed by Procopius:

"But since it was not fated that the Vandals should be destroyed by this expedition, he made Basiliscus commander-in-chief, the brother of his wife Verina, a man who was extraordinarily desirous of the royal power, which he hoped would come to him without a struggle if he won the friendship of Aspar... They say that because Aspar was fearful lest, if the Vandals were defeated, Leo would establish his authority more securely, he repeatedly urged Basiliscus to spare the Vandals and Gaiseric... Basiliscus with his whole fleet put in at a town distant from Carthage no less than two hundred and eighty stades [about 33 miles]... and if he had not purposely played the coward and hesitated, but had undertaken to go straight for Carthage, he would have captured it at the first onset, and he would have reduced the Vandals to subjection without their even thinking of resistance, so overcome was Gaiseric with awe of Leo as an invincible emperor when the report was brought to him that Sardinia and Tripoli had been captured, and when he saw that the fleet of Basiliscus was such as the Romans were said never to have had before. But, as it was, the general's hesitation, whether caused by cowardice or treachery, prevented this success. And Gaiseric, profiting by the negligence of Basiliscus, did as follows. Arming all his subjects in the best way he could, he filled his ships, but not all, for some he kept in readiness empty, and these were the ships that sailed most swiftly. And sending envoys to Basiliscus, he begged him to defer the war for the space of five days, in order that in the meantime he might take counsel and do those things that were especially desired by the emperor. They say also that he sent also a great amount of gold without the knowledge of the army of Basiliscus and thus purchased this armistice... And Basiliscus, either as doing a favor to Aspar in accordance with what he had promised, or selling the moment of opportunity for money, or perhaps thinking it the better course, did as he was requested and remained quietly in the camp, awaiting the moment favorable to the enemy "(*Bellum Vandalicum* 6.3-4, 10-16: Dewing trans., pp.57-61)

When the wind was right, the Vandals then sent in fire ships, and in the ensuing confusion the Vandals fell upon and defeated **Basiliscus'** forces. Priscus concluded,

"So this war came to an end, and Heraclius departed for home, for Marcellinus had been destroyed treacherously by one of his fellow-officers. And Basiliscus, coming to Byzantium, seated himself as a suppliant in the sanctuary of Christ the Great God... The emperor Leo not long afterward destroyed both Aspar and Ardaburius [Aspar's son] in the palace because he suspected that they were plotting against his life" (*Bellum Vandalicum* 6.27: Dewing trans., p.63)

Priscus, too, blamed Basiliscus for losing the war: "Then he could have conquered Carthage itself. Later on, being enticed by Gaiseric with gifts and much money, he gave way and was willingly overcome..." (*fr.*40: Gordon trans. pp.120-121). And Hydatius also repeated the claim that Aspar had conspired with the Vandals, and had paid the penalty ("*Asparem degradatum ad privatam vitam, filium eius occisum, adversum Romanum imperium, sicut detectique sunt, Vandalis consulentes*": *Chron.* 247. *s.a.*469?).

The Vandal campaign of 468 was as ruinously expensive as it was militarily disastrous. It would be sixty-five years before there would be a another serious imperial attempt to reclaim Africa. And yet, for **Leo** it was not a total loss, for he had managed to rid himself of three powerful rivals, the Masters of Soldiers Anthemius, Aspar, and Marcellinus, and to disgrace another, Basiliscus. During the few years that remained of the western empire, imperial efforts would be limited to holding on to what territory remained in western Europe.

Gaul and the Visigothic War

In Gaul, Anthemius was faced by the able and ambitious Visigothic king, Euric (466-484). In 469 or shortly afterward, the Armorican Bretons commanded by Riothamus (whom some would identify as "King Arthur") were engaged by Anthemius to oppose the Visigoths (*Chron.gall.511* no. 649 s.a.470; Sid.Apoll. *Epist*. 3.9). But when, after having occupied Bourges, the Bretons attacked the Goths on their own territory at Déols, they suffered a signal defeat. Jordanes reported,

"Therefore. Euric, king of the Visigoths, seeing the repeated changes of Roman emperors, attempted to bring Gaul under his rule. Seeing this, the emperor Anthemius requested help from the Bretons, whose king Riothamus had been received in the city of Bourges after coming by ship from the ocean with twelve thousand men. Euric, king of the Visigoths, arrived at the head of a great army and for a long time fought with Riothamus, king of the Bretons, before the Romans were able to render aid. Having lost the greater part of his army, Riothamus fled with those who were able to the Burgundians, a nearby people who at that time were allied to the Romans" (*Getica* 237-238; see also Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 2.18: "*Brittani de Bitoricas a Gothis expulsi sunt, multis apud Dolensem vicum peremptis*").

Two years later, Anthemius undertook yet another offensive against the Visigoths, this one led by his son Anthemiolus. The *Gallic Chronicle of 511* described the result:

"Anthemiolus was sent to Arles by his father the emperor Anthemius along with Thorisarius, Everdingus, and Hermianus the Count of the Stables. King Euric encountered them on the other side of the Rhone and, after killing the generals, devastated everything" ("*Antimolus a patre Anthemio imperatore cum Thorisario, Everdingo et Hermiano com. stabuli Arelate directus est, quibus rex Euricus trans Rhodanum occurrit occisisque ducibus omnia vastavit*": *Chron.gall.511* no.649 *s.a.*471).

This marked Anthemius' last attempt to recover any part of Gaul. The offensives in 469 and 471 had failed dismally, and as a result the Visigothic kingdom had expanded still farther. Only small imperial pockets remained, such as around Arles and Marseilles in Provence; and in the Auvergne, where the resistance was led by Ecdicius, the son of **Eparchius Avitus**. In fact, in a letter written to Ecdicius ca.470, Sidonius Apollinaris suggested that the only remaining alternatives for Romans were to go into exile or enter the clergy: "If the state is powerless to render aid, if, as rumor says, the emperor Anthemius is without resource, our nobility is determined to follow your lead, and give up their country or their hair" (*Epist*. 2.1.4).

Anthemius had little effect upon or contact with the rest of the west. A few embassies from Spain have already been mentioned, and Hydatius reports that the Suevi of Galicia also sent an embassy to Anthemius (Hydatius, *Chron.* 251 s.a.469). Northern Gaul, moreover, had long since dropped out of the imperial orbit. There, Romans such as Syagrius and Count Paul operated independently of any outside control, and may even have issued coins in Anthemius' name. To all intents and purposes, all of the west except Italy now had been lost.

DOMESTIC POLICIES

Relations with the Senatorial Aristocracy

Like his predecessors, Anthemius was faced with the need to deal with the powerful and self-conscious western senatorial aristocracy. Of primary importance would have been the need to appease the Italian senators, but it would have been equally important, if he wanted to lay claim to any of the western empire outside Italy, to conciliate the senators of the provinces, and in particular those of Gaul, the location of the only remaining imperial holdings of any consequence.

In late 467, the Gaul Sidonius Apollinaris visited Rome on a civic mission, perhaps representing his native city of Lyons (it is often thought that he was representing Clermont, where he later became bishop, but at this time his strongest ties were still to Lyons). Although the circumstances are not mentioned, the issue very likely involved taxation. He reported on his experiences in several letters that provide vignettes into the circumstances of Anthemius' rule.

In one letter, written shortly after his arrival, Sidonius described his search for appropriate patrons who could assist him in his mission:

"The patrician Ricimer having been well married, and the wealth of both empires scattered to the winds in the process, the community has at last resumed its sober senses and opened door and field again to business... We found two consulars, Gennadius Avienus and Caecina Basilius in enjoyment of a peculiar eminence and conspicuous above the rest; if you leave out the great military officers, these two easily come next to the emperor himself.... Now, while I was considering how best to advance the matter of our Arvernian petition, the Kalends of January came round, on which day the emperor's name was to be enrolled in the fasti as consul for the second time. "The very thing," cried my patron [sc. Basilius], "My dear Sollius, I well know that you are engaged in an exacting duty, but I do wish you would bring out your muse again in honor of the new consul... I will obtain you an audience... I have some experience in these matters; trust me when I say that serious advantage may accrue from this little scheme... He gave me the support of an invincible ally in the act of homage imposed upon me, and managed so to influence the new consul that I was named president of the Senate..." (*Epist.* 1.9.1-7: Dalton trans., pp.21-24).

Anthemius, therefore, endowed the Gaul Sidonius with the office of Prefect of the City of Rome, an office traditionally reserved for the most distinguished members of the Italian aristocracy.

Sidonius' one known activity as Prefect of Rome was the relief of a food shortage. He wrote to another friend, "I rather fear that there may be an uproar in the theatres if the supplies of grain run short, and that the hunger of all the Romans will be laid to my account... News is at hand that five ships from Brindisi have put in at Ostia laden with wheat and honey... and we should have these cargoes ready in no time for the expectant crowds..." (*Epist*. 1.10.2-3: Dalton trans., 1.25-26). The provision of food supplies from Brindisi, on the southeastern coast, shows, at least in this case, that Rome was subsisting on food supplies provided by Italy, not by Africa.

And in general, one of the means that Anthemius had for gaining aristocratic support was in the granting of high ranks and offices. He made especially heavy use of the patriciate, which he often conferred upon civilians, an essentially eastern practice that he now introduced into the west. Some beneficiaries were high-ranking members of the Italian senatorial order, such as the senators **Romanus** and Severus. But other grants were rather unorthodox -- at least from the western point of view. They were made not to Italians, but to Gauls, none of whom had held any illustrious offices. Examples include Sidonius Apollinaris and Magnus Felix, both of whom Anthemius also made prefects, of Rome and Gaul respectively. Anthemius also promised the patriciate to the Arvernian Ecdicius, perhaps in concert with yet another plan for a Gallic offensive, but the grant was forestalled by Anthemius' death. This kind of rank inflation soon became one of the distinguishing marks of the Byzantine Empire.

It also has been suggested that Anthemius planned a pagan revival at Rome. The pagan sympathies of his general Marcellinus were no secret. Nor were those of Fl. Messius Phoebus Severus, a pagan philosopher whom Anthemius made Prefect of Rome (in which capacity he restored part of the Colosseum), Consul (AD 470), and patrician. A contorniate, possibly issued in late 467 or early 468, perhaps on the occasion of Anthemius' consular games, bears a curious and unexplained reference to "The Hippodrome of Hercules", and could be another indication of Anthemius' pagan sympathies.

Legislation

Little else is known of Anthemius' domestic policies beyond what can be gleaned from three extant *novellae*, or "new laws," all of which were issued to Lupercianus, the Praetorian Prefect of Italy. One, issued 19 March 468, was a mere formality, a confirmation of laws that had been issued by the eastern emperor **Leo** (*Novella Anthemii* 2, "*De confirmatione legis domini nostri Leonis augusti*"). Another, promulgated 21 February 468, dealt with free women who married their own slaves or freedmen, and declared that the offspring of such unions were to be of servile status (*Novella Anthemii* 1, "*De mulieribus quae servis propriis vel libertis se iunxerunt et de naturalibus filiis*"). And the third, also issued on 19 March 468, largely repeated a ruling of **Leo**, and reiterated the right of the emperors to dispose of ownerless property, with the proviso that past owners maintained a claim if they could establish that the property had wrongly been declared ownerless (*Novella Anthemii* 3, "*De bonis vacantibus*"). Finally, one also might note an eastern law (*CJ* 1.11.8), issued 1 July 472, that had the superscription "*Impp. Leo et Anthemius AA. Dioscoro pp*" (Dioscorus being the individual who had delivered the panegyric to **Leo** and Anthemius in 467), and was the last extant occasion on which a western emperor was mentioned in an eastern law.

Coinage

Anthemius' coinage emphasized the sharing of rule between Anthemius and Leo. Gold solidi struck at Rome, Milan, and Ravenna show the emperors clasping hands. Other solidi issued in the name of Euphemia depict two enthroned empresses, and may have been issued in commemmoration of the marriage between Ricimer and Alypia. After late 467, coinage at Ravenna decreased, and little was issued at Milan, reflecting Anthemius' concentration of interests at Rome. Semisses were issues only at Rome, and tremisses only at Rome and Milan. Siliquae and rare half-siliquae were struck at Rome for Anthemius and Euphemia, and bronze coins were struck at about 1.80 gm. at Rome. See, in general, Kent, *RIC*

INTERNAL DISSENSION

Anthemius was faced with several challenges to his rule. One famous incident was the trial of **Arvandus**, who had been appointed to two terms as Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, first by **Severus** (461-465) and then by Anthemius himself. In 468, a commission of influential Gauls traveled to Rome to accuse him of treasonous collusion with the Visigothic court. They produced a letter in which Arvandus encouraged Euric to declare war against Anthemius and to divide Gaul between the Goths and the Burgundians (Sid.Apoll., *Ep*. 1.7.5). Arvandus even may have aimed at an imperial throne obtained with barbarian aid. Arvandus' friend Sidonius Apollinaris, as Prefect of Rome, was placed in the awkward position of presiding at Arvandus' trial. Sidonius chose to resign his position instead, and he subsequently reported back to his Gallic friend Vincentius, who was himself in Visigothic service, about the course of Arvandus' trial:

"During his first term as prefect his rule was very popular, the second was disastrous... At last the general hate encompassed him like a rampart; before he was well divested of this authority, he was invested with guards, and as a prisoner brought in bonds to Rome... At the Capitol, the Count of the Sacred Largesses, his friend Flavius Asellus, acted as his host and jailer, showing him deference for his prefectship, which seemed, as it were, yet warm, so newly was it stripped from him. Meanwhile, the three envoys from Gaul arrived upon his heels with the provincial decrees empowering them to impeach him in the public name... They brought ... an

intercepted letter, which Arvandus' secretary, now also under arrest, declared had been dictated by his master. It was evidently addressed to the king of the Goths [sc. Euric], whom it dissuaded from concluding peace with the Greek emperor, urging that instead he should attack the Bretons north of the Loire, and asserting that the Law of Nations called for a division of Gaul between the Visigoths and Burgundians... Of course the lawyers found here a flagrant case of treason... [at the trial before the Senate] the parties stood up and the envoys set forth their charge. They first produced their mandate from the province, then the already-mentioned latter... He was stripped on the spot of all the privileges pertaining to his prefecture... and consigned to the common jail... He was then condemned to death... We, of course... are doing all we can... We redouble prayers and supplications that the imperial clemency may suspend the stroke of the drawn sword, and rather visit a man already half-dead with confiscation of property and exile..." (*Epist*. 1.7.3-13: Dalton trans., 1.15-20).

Cassiodorus, who also asserts that **Arvandus** had wished to seize the throne, confirms that Sidonius and his friends were successful in averting the death penalty (*Chron*. 1287, s.a.469: "*Arabundus imperium temptans iussu Anthemii exilio deportatur*").

Shortly thereafter, another Gallic official, Seronatus, who may have served as Vicar of the Seven Provinces, also was accused of treason. Sidonius called him "the Catiline of our age," and praised "the patriots who did not fear to bring to justice the infamous Seronatus, betrayer of imperial provinces to the barbarians, when the state for which they risked their lives scarcely had the courage on his conviction to carry out the capital sentence" (*Epist*. 7.7.2: Dalton trans., 2.110-111). Seronatus, therefore, lacked the aristocratic support that saved Arvandus from execution.

Another problem arose in 470, when the Master of Offices **Romanus** was implicated in a conspiracy against Anthemius. John of Antioch reported, "Anthemius, the emperor of the west, fell into a serious sickness by sorcery and punished many men involved in the crime, especially Romanus, who had held the post of master and was enrolled among the patricians, being a very close friend of Ricimer (*fr*.207: Gordon trans., p.122)." Romanus then was executed ("*Romanus patricius affectans imperium capitaliter est punitus*": Cassiodorus, *Chron**. 1289 *s.a*.470; also Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana* 15.2).

THE CIVIL WAR

Ultimately, as in the case of **Majorian**, a western emperor's arrangement with Ricimer unravelled. The execution of **Romanus** led to a breach between Ricimer and Anthemius: "Whereupon, Ricimer left Rome in anger and summoned 6,000 men drawn up under his command for the war against the Vandals" (John of Antioch *fr*.207: Gordon trans. p.122). Ricimer retired to Milan, and relations between him and Anthemius worsened. It appeared that a full-scale civil war was about to break out.

At this point, the story is taken up by Ennodius of Pavia in his *Life of St. Epiphanius*. Ricimer, now in Milan, heard rumors of Epiphanius' sanctity:

"Thus, the report reached the ears of Ricimer, who at that time held a position second only to that of the emperor Anthemius in the government of the state. While the emperor was at Rome, envy, which sets at variance those who hold power, and equality of dignity, which ever engenders discord, tossed the seed of strife between the two. Such anger and dissension had arisen between them that each was making preparations for war against the other; and as if the provocations to wrath mentioned above were not in themselves sufficient stimuli, the followers of the two leaders abetted the quarrel by their counsel... Meanwhile, the notables of Liguria gathered before Ricimer at Milan, where he was then residing, and on bended knee and with their heads bowed low they begged for the preservation of peace between the two parties and that one of them make advances toward a reconciliation and thus put an end to the conflict... Ricimer was pacified and ... he promised to do his part toward restoring concord. 'But who,' he said, 'will assume the chief burden of this legation? To whom can be trusted a task of such importance? Is there anyone who can bring to reason an irate Galatian, and him the emperor?... (*Vita Epiphanii* 51-53: Cook trans., p.53)

The choice fell upon Epiphanius, bishop of Milan:

"Word was brought to Anthemius that a bishop of Liguria had arrived on an embassy, a man whom no one, howsoever eloquent, could adequately describe. But the emperor responded, 'Cleverly does Ricimer contend with me by means of his embassies; he sends such men to subdue by prayers those whom he provokes by injuries... If I can possibly comply with his request, I shall... But I doubt that Ricimer will obtain what he asks of me. For I know all too well how immoderate are his desires and how far beyond the limits of reason are the conditions he proposes... "(*ibid*. 60-61: Cook trans., pp.55-57).

After Epiphanius had made his plea, Anthemius responded,

"O, holy bishop, against Ricimer we have cause for complaint too great for words. The many marked favors that we have bestowed upon him have been to no avail. We -- not, I must say, without shame to our realm and to our blood -- have admitted him to our family, yielding in our love for the satet to what would be a source of odium to others. Who of my predecessors has ever, in order to assure peace and security to his people, included his daughter among the gifts that had to be given to the skin-clad Goth?... How many wars has he not prepared against the state? To the rage of how many foreign peoples has he not added tinder?..." (*ibid*. 66-68: Cook trans., p.59; see also Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana* 15.203).

In spite of such complaints, however, a truce was effected, and seems to have lasted over a year. It was during that time that Anthemius made his abortive invasion of Gaul, suggesting that for a time, at least, he felt that he had nothing to fear from Ricimer.

Hostilities broke out again in early 472, and Malalas provides a detailed account:

"While this same Leo was ruling, the Roman emperor Anthemius met his end. He was threatened with the serious enmity of his son-in-law Ricimer, who, being a Goth, caused Anthemius to fear for his safety. Therefore, seeking asylum in the church of St. Peter, he took refuge pretending that he was ill. Meanwhile, when the emperor Leo learned what was happening, he sent to Rome Olybrius, a Roman patrician, after he and Rusticus had served in the consulate [in 464], so that, as a representative of the Roman senate, he might quell the hostilities that existed between Anthemius and his son-in-law Ricimer. In addition, Leo enjoined upon him in his directive that, after he had reconciled Anthemius and Ricimer, he should depart from Rome and go to the king of Africa, the Vandal Gaiseric, with whom Leo did not doubt that he had great influence because the sister of Olybrius' wife Placidia had married his son, and persuade him to reconcile himself with him [Leo]. The emperor Leo, however, suspected that Olybrius favored Gaiseric and would secretly take his side. He therefore feared for his own sake, lest, should Gaiseric declare war upon him, that Olybrius, who had a tie of marriage with him, would betray Constantinople to Gaiseric. Therefore, after Olybrius had departed for Rome, having left his daughter and his wife Placidia at Constantinople, the most sacred emperor Leo gave a message to a subordinate of the Master of Offices to be delivered to Anthemius, emperor of the Romans, in these words: "I have removed," he said, "Aspar and Ardaburius from this world, so that no one who might oppose me would survive. But you also must kill your son-in-law Ricimer, lest there be anyone who might betray you. Moreover, I also have sent the patrician Olybrius to you; I wish you to kill him, so that you might reign, ruling rather than serving others." Furthermore, Ricimer had placed at Portus [Ostia] and the individual ports of Rome a Gothic guard, nor was entry permitted to anyone before he had indicated to Ricimer what his mission was. Therefore, when Modestus the *magistrianus*, who had been sent by Leo to Anthemius, came to Rome he was immediatedly searched and the letters of the emperor, sent from Leo to Anthemius, were taken from him and handed over to Ricimer, who showed them to Olybrius" (*Chron*. 373-374).

At this point, probably in April, Ricimer set up **Olybrius** as emperor in opposition to Anthemius, as made clear by John of Antioch:

"Ricimer was aroused to hostility against Anthemius, the emperor of the west, and although married to Alypia, his daughter, he waged a civil war inside the city for five months. Both those in authority and the mob sided with Anthemius, but the host of his fellow barbarians were with Ricimer. Odovacar was also with him, a man of the people called the Sciri, the son of Edeco and the brother of Onoulph who was both the bodyguard and butcher of Armatus [an eastern Master of Soldiers murdered ca.477]. Anthemius was living in the palace. Ricimer cut off the districts by the Tiber and afflicted those inside with hunger. Hence, when there was an engagement with them, a great part of Anthemius' faction fell. Ricimer overwhelmed the rest by treachery and appointed Olybrius emperor"(*fr.*209.1-2: Gordon trans., pp.122-123)

This marks the first Italian appearance of Odovavar, who in 476 would depose Romulus Augustulus (475-476) and become "King of Italy."

The *Fasti vindobonenses priores* likewise reported, "during this consulate a civil war occurred at Rome between the emperor Anthemius, and the emperor Olybrius was proclaimed at Rome, and the emperor Anthemius was killed on 11 July: ("*his cons. bellum civile gestum est Romae inter Anthemius imperatorem et Ricimere patricio, et levatus est imp. Olybrius Romae, et occisus est imp. Anthemius V idus Iulias*": no.606. s.a. 472).

Both Ricimer and Anthemius had summoned help from Gaul. Anthemius lost his last hope when Bilimer, an otherwise unknown **rector Galliarum** ("chief of Gaul") was defeated and killed near Rome in July 472 (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana* 15.4). He may have been appointed Master of Soldiers in Gaul after the Burgundian Gundobad, the previous holder of the office, went over to Ricimer. Indeed, it was Gundobad himself who was responsible for Anthemius' death. Malalas reported,

"Ricimer immediately summoned Gundobad, the son of his sister, from Gaul, where he was Master of Soldiers, who, having killed the emperor Anthemius in the very church of the St. Peter the Apostle, where he had taken refuge, then returned to Gaul" (*Chron*. 375).

Ricimer's sister had married Gundobad's father Gundioc. John of Antioch tells a similar tale, which differs only in the identity of the church:

"Civil war had then afflicted Rome for five whole months, until those around Anthemius gave in to the barbarians and left their ruler defenseless. He mingled with those begging alms and went among the suppliants of the martyr Chrysogonus [now Santa Maria in Trastevere]. There he was beheaded by Gundobad, Ricimer's nephew, after reigning five years, three months, and eighteen days. Ricimer did not deem him worthy of royal burial and appointed Olybrius to the imperial authority "(*fr.*209.1-2: Gordon trans., pp.122-123)

Other sources, however, blamed Ricimer for Anthemius' death. Cassiodorus put a moral judgment on Ricimer's actions: "During this consulate, the patrician Ricimer, having made Olybrius emperor at Rome, after a short battle in the city killed Anthemius contrary to reverence for the emperor and the claims of marriage..."("*His conss. patricius Ricimer Romae facto imperatore Olybrio Anthemium contra reverentiam principis et ius adfinitatis cum brevi clade civitatis extinguit*": *Chron*. 1293, *s.a*.472). And two eastern sources, Count Marcellinus and Procopius, also assumed that Anthemius had been killed by Ricimer: "*Anthemius imperator Romae a Recimero genero suo occiditur. loco eius Olybrius substitutus septimo mense imperii sui vita defunctus est*" (Marcellinus, *Chron*. *s.a*.472); "Now Anthemius, the emperor of the west, died at the hand of his son-in-law Ricimer, and Olybrius,

succeeding to the throne, a short time afterward suffered the same fate (Procopius, *Bellum Vandalicum* 7.1-3). The *Gallic Chronicle of 511* hedged: "After a civil war in the city, the emperor Anthemius was killed either by his son-in-law Ricimer or by Gundobad" ("*Anthemius imperator acto intra urbem civili bello a Ricimere genero suo vel Gundebado extinctus est*": no.650 *s.a*. 472).

EPILOGUE

Anthemius was the last western emperor who made any serious effort to recover any lost territories. He clearly had the will, and even some of the resources, to do so, but all of his efforts nevertheless ended in failure, and he went down in history as yet one more "shadow" emperor, albeit the one with the longest tenure in office, to meet his end at the hands of a barbarian general. One of Anthemius' most insurmountable difficulties was his lack of broad support in Italy. Not only was he opposed by Ricimer, but the Italian Senate turned against him as well and took Ricimer's side, as noted by Malalas: "Then Ricimer established Olybrius as emperor at Rome, with the approval of the senate..." (*Chron*. 373-375). Anthemius' attempts to find support outside Italy, in the east and in Gaul, only demonstrate the ultimate hopelessness of his cause.

Even his pagan gods, it seems, presaged Anthemius' doom. His reign was marked by a number of portents that would have served as a sign of misfortunes to come: Victor of Tonnena told of a comet that appeared for forty days in 467; the chronicler Marcellinus noted that Ravenna was struck by an earthquake in the same year; the *Fasti vindobonenses priores* reported a plague of cattle in the same year; and Hydatius related (no.244), "In the second year of the emperor Anthemius blood burst forth from the ground in the middle of Toulouse and continued to flow for an entire day."

Anthemius' sons, who seem to have remained in the east, went on to have rather tumultuous careers. In 479, Fl. Marcianus, supported by Procopius Anthemius and Romulus, revolted against the eastern emperor **Zeno**, claiming that he had a better right to the throne. After some initial successes, he was taken captive and forcibly ordained as a priest. He then escaped, led another revolt, and was again imprisoned. He is last heard of in 484, when he was released by the rebel Illus and sent to Italy to seek assistance from Odovacar. Procopius Anthemius and Romulus fled to Italy after the 479 debacle. Procopius eventually returned to Constantinople, where he became Consul in 515; Romulus is not heard of again.

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